

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 01039 231735Z
ACTION NODS-00

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S E C R E T PRETORIA 1039

NODIS

DEPT PLS PASS WHITE HOUSE, USUN, MOOSE IN LONDON, AND
BRUSSELS/USEEC FOR AMBASSADOR SMITH

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: MNUC, PARF, SF
SUBJECT: US-SOUTH AFRICAN TECHNICAL NUCLEAR TALKS

REFS: (A) PRETORIA 1020; (B) PRETORIA 1021

1. THE AMBASSADOR AND NUCLEAR TECHNICAL TEAM MET AT
PELINDABA FOR LUNCH WITH AEB PRESIDENT ROUX, DEPUTY
PRESIDENT HUGO, AND TWO OTHERS. LUNCH WAS PROPOSED
BY DR. ROUX AS FOLLOW-UP TO YESTERDAY'S DISCUSSIONS
(REF B, PARA 7).

2. IN DISCUSSION CONCENTRATING PRIMARILY ON PROCEDURAL
ASPECTS OF REACHING US-SA NUCLEAR ACCORD, AMBASSADOR
STRESSED DESIRABILITY OF TEAM RETURNING TO WASHINGTON
WITH AS CLEAR AN INDICATION AS POSSIBLE OF SAG'S REACTION
TO US PROPOSALS AND ITS IDEAS CONCERNING ELEMENTS OF AN
EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT. ROUX, WHO INITIALLY DOUBTED THAT HE
COULD HAVE A TECHNICAL REPORT ON TEAM VISIT IN HANDS OF
MINISTERS BEFORE MID-WEEK, AGREED TO ACCELERATE THE
PROCESS SO THAT MINISTERS WOULD HAVE A READOUT FROM THE
TECHNICAL SIDE OVER THE WEEKEND. ROUX FURTHER UNDERTOOK

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 PRETOR 01039 231735Z

TO GO TO CAPE TOWN AS EARLY AS WEDNESDAY IF NECESSARY FOR ANY
NECESSARY DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN SAG TECHNICAL AND POLITICAL
SIDES. TEAM EXPLAINED TO ROUX THAT A FAVORABLE SAG
RESPONSE TO US PROPOSALS IS A PREREQUISITE FOR ANY
SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATION INVOLVING AMBASSADOR GERARD SMITH.
TEAM ALSO POINTED OUT, IN RESPONSE TO ROUX'S QUESTION, THAT
THERE WOULD BE NO SUPPLY OF FUEL FOR SAFARI IN THE ABSENCE OF

SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT.

3. DR. ROUX REITERATED THAT HE IS UNDER INSTRUCTION TO GIVE HIS FIRST REACTION TO THE US PROPOSALS TO HIS SUPERIORS. IN CONVERSATION, HOWEVER, ROUX APPEARED TO GO AS FAR AS HE COULD IN INDICATING THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES FOUND THE PROPOSALS ACCEPTABLE FROM THE TECHNICAL POINT OF VIEW. TEAM'S IMPRESSION, BASED ON THE EXCHANGE, IS THAT ROUX WILL PRESENT THE PROPOSALS TO MINISTERS IN A FAVORABLE LIGHT.

4. TEAM WILL BE TRAVELING TO CAPE TOWN FEBRUARY 24 TO BE AVAILABLE FOR A MEETING WITH FOURIE NEXT WEEK, IF IT CAN BE ARRANGED. AMBASSADOR HAS POINTED OUT TO FOURIE THE NEED FOR SOME REACTION FROM THE SAG BEFORE THE TEAM LEAVES SOUTH AFRICA (REF A), AND INTENDS TO BE IN TOUCH WITH FOURIE FEBRUARY 24. AMBASSADOR'S JUDGMENT IS THAT PRESENCE OF TEAM IN CAPE TOWN MAY ADD AN ELEMENT OF PRESSURE ON THE SAG TO RESPOND MORE QUICKLY TO OUR PROPOSALS.

5. THE TECHNICAL PART OF THE LUNCHEON CONVERSATION CENTERED AROUND THE SA ENRICHMENT PROCESS AND VALINDABA. ROUX COULD NOT BE DRAWN INTO ANY STATEMENT ON THE DESIGN OR OPERATIONAL ENRICHMENT LEVEL OR CAPACITY OF VALINDABA. HE STATED THAT ANY ACCESS OR THE RELEASE OF THE
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PAGE 03 PRETOR 01039 231735Z

MOST ELEMENTARY PARAMETERS WAS SUBJECT TO A CHANGE OF POLICY BY PRIME MINISTER VORSTER. IN RESPONSE TO US STATEMENT THAT PROPOSED SAFEGUARDS PROGRAM AT VALINDABA WAS PREDICATED AND CONTINGENT UPON THE ASSUMPTION OF A MAXIMUM ENRICHMENT LEVEL OF LESS THAN FIVER PERCENT, ROUX DID NOT WITHDRAW HIS VEILED SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM. DURING CONVERSATION ROUX MADE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL REMARKS: (1) A LOW ENRICHED URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT BASED ON THE SA PROCESS COULD BE USED (CONVERTED?) TO PRODUCE HEU; (2) THE SA PROCESS IS CHARACTERIZED BY LOW CAPITAL BUT HIGH OPERATIONAL (ENERGY) COSTS; (3) THE SA PROCESS WOULD BE COMPETITIVE IN EUROPE WITH OTHER ENRICHMENT PROCESSES; (4) THE ENERGY CONSUMPTION IS COMPARABLE TO OR LITTLE HIGHER THAN GASEOUS DIFFUSION BUT COULD BE REDUCED SOMEWHAT AT THE EXPENSE OF MORE COSTLY (COMPLEX?) SEPARATING ELEMENTS; (5) THE TECHNOLOGY IS NOT COMPLEX (RELATIVE TO CENTRIFUGE OR GASEOUS DIFFUSION?); (6) THE OPTIMUM MODULE SIZE WOULD BE 50 MTSWU/A BUT THIS WOULD REQUIRE SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT AND AN INDUSTRIAL BASE BEYOND SOUTH AFRICAN CAPABILITIES.

6. IN CONNECTION WITH LAST POINT, ROUX DESCRIBED

PAST FRUITLESS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN INDUSTRIAL SUPPORT
FROM THE WEST GERMAN FIRM STEAG. HE ALSO REFERRED TO
EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM AN UNNAMED
THIRD COUNTRY, WHICH WERE BROKEN OFF BY THAT COUNTRY
AS A RESULT OF THE SOWETO EVENTS OF LAST OCTOBER.
IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, ROUX AFFIRMED THAT SOUTH
AFRICA'S OFFER TO SHARE ITS ENRICHMENT TECHNOLOGY
WITH OTHERS STILL STANDS. IN FURTHER DISCUSSION OF
PRO'S AND CON'S OF ENRICHMENT TECHNOLOGY TRANSFERS, ROUX
SAID THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD NOT GIVEN THOUGHT TO MODIFYING
ITS TECHNOLOGY TO PREVENT PRODUCTION OF HEU, BUT
COULD LOOK INTO THE QUESTION.
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